1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

ADOLESCENCE, SEX AND MARRIAGE

155 152 guilt, especially with regard to sex, produce the psychological disposition to sexual jealousy institutionalized in this community as well as in many other communities in rural Egypt? It is well known that in Egypt disputes over land, water and women rank as three of the most common causes [694] of crime.[1] This does not mean that sibling rivalry and sex prohibitions are the only causes, but seem to provide the psychological field for the moral and religious values connected with fidelity and the propriety of sexual jealousy. A woman is identified not only with 'shame' but also with 'honour' and to preserve one's honour is tantamount to avoid exposure to shame.[2]

These attitudes, according to Kardiner, would also help to understand the dichotomy of sexes and to prevent sexual jealousies from coming out [180] to open hostilities. They also appear to be one of the weapons of social equilibrium and of preserving in-male and in-female solidarity.[3]

Here it is also possible to give some satisfactory answer to the connec- 577 tion between the nature of the community and its demands on individuals as represented by sexual regulations. The central and principal quality in a polite (muaddab) or virtuous person is his conformity to the norms governing sexual behaviour; the flouting of which in any manner would condemn him as impolite and vicious irrespective of his other qualities. Morality and virtue are primarily connected with stringent sexual controls. The villagers, although envying the city dwellers their material comfort, deplore their moral laxity, e.g. women's emancipation in dress, love affairs, use of cosmetics, women's participation in men's work. In this [837] community I heard of no cases of adultery or illegitimate children for the [848] last thirty years, though cases of homosexuality and jokes about sexual [838] pleasure from animals are not uncommon amongst the adolescents and young men. Stringent sexual controls are an essential agent for the main- [839] tenance of solidarity, the cohesion and the orderly living of a group with its puritanic religious code and its social organization based, among other things, on a clear-cut sex dichotomy.[4]

887 885 Whatever views may be held about the psychological problems connected with adolescence in Silwa, this stage is certainly the prologue to the full status of adulthood which is eventually attained by marriage. Marriage, after circumcision, marks the greatest ceremonial occasion in 585 the individual's life. The best way of describing marriage conditions in Silwa is to give an account of a marriage ceremony which the writer

[1] Doreen Warriner, *Land and Poverty in the Middle East*, London, 1948.

[2] Cf. J. C. Flugel, *Men and their Motives*, London, 1943, and Ernest Jones, *Papers on Psycho-analysis*, where he writes: 'The ultimate source of the fear and guilt that lie behind all these reactions (of sexual jealousy) is the relationship to another potential man and it is derived from the boy's unconscious fixation on childish attitudes; it is hard for him to "picture" a woman quite apart from another man to whom she secretly belongs.' p. 483.

[3] A. Kardiner, *op. cit.*, pp. 476–7.

[4] See Margaret Read, 'The Moral Code of the Ngoni and their former Military State', in *Africa*, Vol. XI, 1938.

their villages and in their fields they provide subjects for the art of others, but remain unconscious of their own beauty. Yet their love of the soil, their sense of rhythm, and their taste for songs, stories and colours should make their artistic education easy. /81 /83

They are more apt at figures, at repetition and at copying. The author has met fellaheen who can do very complicated arithmetical problems in their heads, and can put an accountant right where he has made a mistake, whether by accident or design. Others reproduce models they are given with the utmost faithfulness, and retain for a very long time the memory of a remark or a visit, or of an object they have been shown. But although their memory is excellent their understanding is slow. [803]

Yet in childhood they are quick to understand, as may be seen when they are in school or at play; but at about fifteen they begin to get dull. Up to this age the fellaheen are lively, and seem quicker than the people of the West.

Their early physical development and the effect of the climate might explain this. But what can explain the apathy that overcomes them afterwards, and keeps them, in spite of everything, a backward race? /81 /82

Undernourishment has been suggested as a cause. But if this were responsible their physical development would also suffer. The adult fellah has a strong constitution. Some sociologists put it down to masturbation, which is fairly common in the Islamic East; but this vice seems limited to the cities, for country people are much less morbid. It has also been attributed to the unavoidable effect of climate, as a plant which grows too quickly stops growing at a certain point, and withers. But there are fellaheen who have left their villages and produced in the second generation good doctors, capable engineers, or at least officials and businessmen equal to those of other countries. [142 839]

It can only be his social environment which limits the intelligence of the young fellah, that is to say the crass ignorance which surrounds him from his first entry into the community, and the routine of a life which bows him down to the soil and condemns him to everlasting repetition. This is what arrests the development of his mind. Intelligence is developed by new gain and achievements, which are unknown in this too stable world of the Egyptian peasantry.